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TITLE: Determinants of HIV Transmission in High Risk Women: The Partner Selection Criteria Study

AUTHORS: Islam N, Wolverton M, Westerholm JH, Boyett BC (Houston DHHS HIV Serosurveillance, Houston, Texas)

OBJECTIVES: HIV diagnoses are increasing in women, especially women of color, while slightly decreasing in men. This study identified the beliefs and attitudes leading to consistent condom use among a group of women seeking services at STD clinics.

METHODS: We interviewed 2,424 women attending two STD clinics in Houston, Texas, from 1996-97. A questionnaire collecting information on demographics, perception of risk for HIV/STD, sexual history with three most recent male partners, and condom use was administered. Blood was collected for ELISA and Western Blot testing. Odds ratios for consistent condom use (i.e., condom use during every sexual encounter) were obtained through logistic regression analysis

RESULTS: The majority of participants were young women of color (median age=24; 78% African-American) and approximately 1% of the women interviewed were HIV positive (n=24). Further, approximately 3% reported intravenous drug use (n=77) while the remainder reported only heterosexual contact. Women who felt that condom use was necessary to prevent HIV/STD (OR=1.59, $p<0.001$), conveyed the need to use condoms to their partner (OR=1.57, $p<0.001$), and insisted that condoms be used during sexual intercourse (OR=2.41, $p<0.001$) were all more likely to use condoms for all sexual encounters. Women who reported all three of these behaviors were even more likely to use condoms consistently (OR=2.45, $p<0.001$).

CONCLUSIONS: Women who internalize the need to use condoms to prevent HIV/STD and communicate this need to their partner are more likely to consistently use condoms and, therefore, reduce the risk of transmission of the HIV virus to and from their male partners.

PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Marcia Wolverton, MPH

Address: 8000 N. Stadium Drive, 5th Floor
Houston, TX 77054

Telephone: (713) 794-9441

Fax: (713) 794-9391

E-mail: wolvertonm@aol.com